THE ROUND TABLE
ROOM 204
8 WELLINGTON ST. EAST

TORONTO, November 26th, 1918.

Dear Sir Edmund:-

You asked me last Thursday to try to put down on paper my ideas on the course of reconstruction lectures that we discussed. The Universities have a peculiar right of and responsibility for leadership at this moment in the proper presentation of the New Canadian Problems. Opinion is as yet so unformed that the public will readily respond to the views of the expert. Such an opportunity will not recut as opinion hardens under political developments that will inevitably accompany reconstruction campaigns in the near future. It may not be possible to say very much in detail, but it is possible to lay down certain very important principles. It is certainly possible, and most clearly necessary, to counteract a great deal of the unconsidered generalities and undigested recitation of principles that are being popularised by the leader writers of the daily press.

The future of University influence will depend absolutely in the long run upon whether or not it makes good its claim to be the natural source of enlightenment on the dark problems of reconstruction. It seems to me the very plain duty of the University, (and it will redound very greatly to its prestige) to take a definite lead, and to take it without delay.

I am sending you, therefore, a list of suggestions for a course of lectures to be delivered not later than the last week of February next, at some time and place convenient

to the general public. I think it would be advisable that before the delivery of the lectures they should be edited and prepared for publication, as their effect would be very much heightened if they could be brought out in book form immediately after delivery, by the University Press.

I feel strongly that any such course of lectures and essays should have an underlying cohesion in the method of treatment. There are certain subjects about which press and public are talking and thinking, and talking and thinking alike are "sloppy". People are using the word "reconstruction" about education, society, and economics, with little or no sense of the problems such revolutions imply. The significance of Great Britain's record and the real import of the emergence of the U.S.A. are misunderstood and confused. 'High' finance and 'open' diplomacy are little more than sounding phrases. If the lectures and the book are to present a sustained sequence of thought, both must be edited. My own suggestion would be the formation by the President of a very small committee to undertake the work of corelation, publicity, and production. There will be a certain amount of secretarial work to be done, especially in the actual preparation of the lectures for the press. Any such work Hodder Williams of the Department of History will gladly undertake if the President so wishes.

I append, therefore, a draft syllabus, and have ventured to add some notes on the lines that I think should be taken in each subject.

THE WAR'S LEGACIES TO THINKING CANADIANS.

A course of seven lectures delivered in the University of Toronto in February 1919 and published by the University in March.

1. The future of education.....Sir Robert Falconer.
2. The future of finance.....Sir Edmund Walker.
3. The evolution of straight-forward diplomacy.....R. Hodder Williams.
4. Social reconstruction.....C. S. McIver.
5. Economic reconstruction.....Sir John Willison.
6. The spiritual leadership of Great Britian among the English speaking peoples.....The Minister of Education.
7. The United States and their new problems.....Professor Shotwell.

Notes.

1. Here before all things the University must take a definite stand, and make a considered declaration of ideals. Speaking broadly Canadian education in the past has been too faithfully adapted to a provincial stage of thought. It is of the utmost importance to the statesmanship of the future, in which Canada will take an increasing world-responsibility, that the rising generation should have their attention relentlessly focussed on other affairs beside their own immediate local interest. For example, the suggestion of a chair of Government in Toronto University is a step in the right direction; but only a step; it is imperative that the whole teaching of the humanities, and indeed the whole atmosphere of higher education, should be instinct with a new meaning of the Canadian polity. All this is no doubt commonplace enough, but provincialism in education has bitten very deep, and now is the time to enunciate a new policy of broader preparation for citizenship.

2. I think it would be necessary to admit in this lecture that the operations of financiers had not always been carried out with proper consideration for the interests of the public. Undoubtedly, by a very large section of the public the occasional sins of financial people have been taken to prove that the larger finance is an evil. It would be of great service if the imperative necessity of large combinations of capital to effect the economic purposes of humanity was made clear. Of course it is obvious enough to us that great railway systems and the like, which are absolutely necessary to feed the population of the world, cannot be built or operated without large financial combinations. The success of the grain growers in the West is, after all, dependent on a financial organization already prepared for them, Most of the experiments proposed in the direction of a socialisation of public utilities are also dependent on a highly efficient financial machinery. The Banks themselves are expressions of a truly social combination of resources, and are probably by far the most economical vehicle for the conservation and utilization of small savings. All these truisms need explaining to the lay mind. And there are many other points that it is important that the public should understand, but there you will know far better than I. I should not have ventured to make these suggestions but that you asked me to put down something of what is in my mind.

3. The general ignorance of foreign politics and the generalisations from across the line have led large sections of our public into two very obvious errors: first, the complacent idea that there is something of a new discovery about honest and straightforward diplomacy; second, and more dangerous, that

on the whole the diplomacy of all the European peoples was ethically on much the same plane, and that in the regeneration of international relations there is not much to go upon except North American dicta. The result is a very considerable confusion about "openness" in diplomacy. Democratisation of foreign policy has been overdone, and the fundamental fact that diplomacy follows not forms of government but national ideas of right and wrong almost ignored. It should be made clear to the public by the authoritative use of the history of say the last fifty years of diplomatic history that British diplomacy, though frequently aristrocratic has been extraordinarily simple and straightforward, and never tortuous and tricky like the diplomacy of Prussia and Russia. Examples abound: e.g. Palmerston and Gladstone on Belgium as against the Benedetti treaty; the Austrian lie about Bosnia and the Ems telegram as against the 1914 White Book; Lenin and Trotsky as against the Wilson notes on the South American conspiracy. The object of the lecture should not be to prove the success of "British" diplomacy but its inherent decency as a standard to live up to, and a "jumping off place" for future developments of "open" diplomacy.

4 and 5.

Willison and McIver might be left to divide their lectures on reconstruction as they thought best, so as to avoid repetition. Social and economic seem to be the best titular divisions. Here again is a magnificent opportunity for the University as a body to give its imprimatur to enlightened and enterprising views of what is being treated in the press in the most slipshod, uninstructed and timid way.

6. We have heard all about the material contributions of Great Britain to the war, but far too little in regard to the spiritual impulse that unquestionably had its origin in the Mother Country of the English speaking race. The remarkable efforts of the Dominions and the obvious effects of the huge force behind the tardy entrance of the U.S. must on no account be allowed to blind Canadians to the fact that Britain has been able to bear the continuous strain and sacrifice of over four years of war, an immeasurably greater strain than any other English-speaking people, because she has always had a fine spiritual realisation of what it is all for. It is perfectly true that the world had the right to expect it from Great Britain, but it is also true that from first to last Britain gave what was needed; and this again ought to be said, and Cody, freshly returned and greatly impressed, seems to me the man to say it.

7. Wrong's genius for popular lecturing will not be available for this subject, as he will probably be in England by the new year. If the plan matures, would it not be possible to make a strong representation to the "House" Committee that they could do a great service by sending us one of their best equipped members to give an authoritative impression of how America is looking forward? Why not Shotwell? He is a graduate of Toronto, with a fine position in the United States intellectual world which has been greatly enhanced by his work both before and since their entry, and would be able to think more easily in terms of the relation of Canada to U.S. activities both during the war and after.

Yours very sincerely
A Skelton